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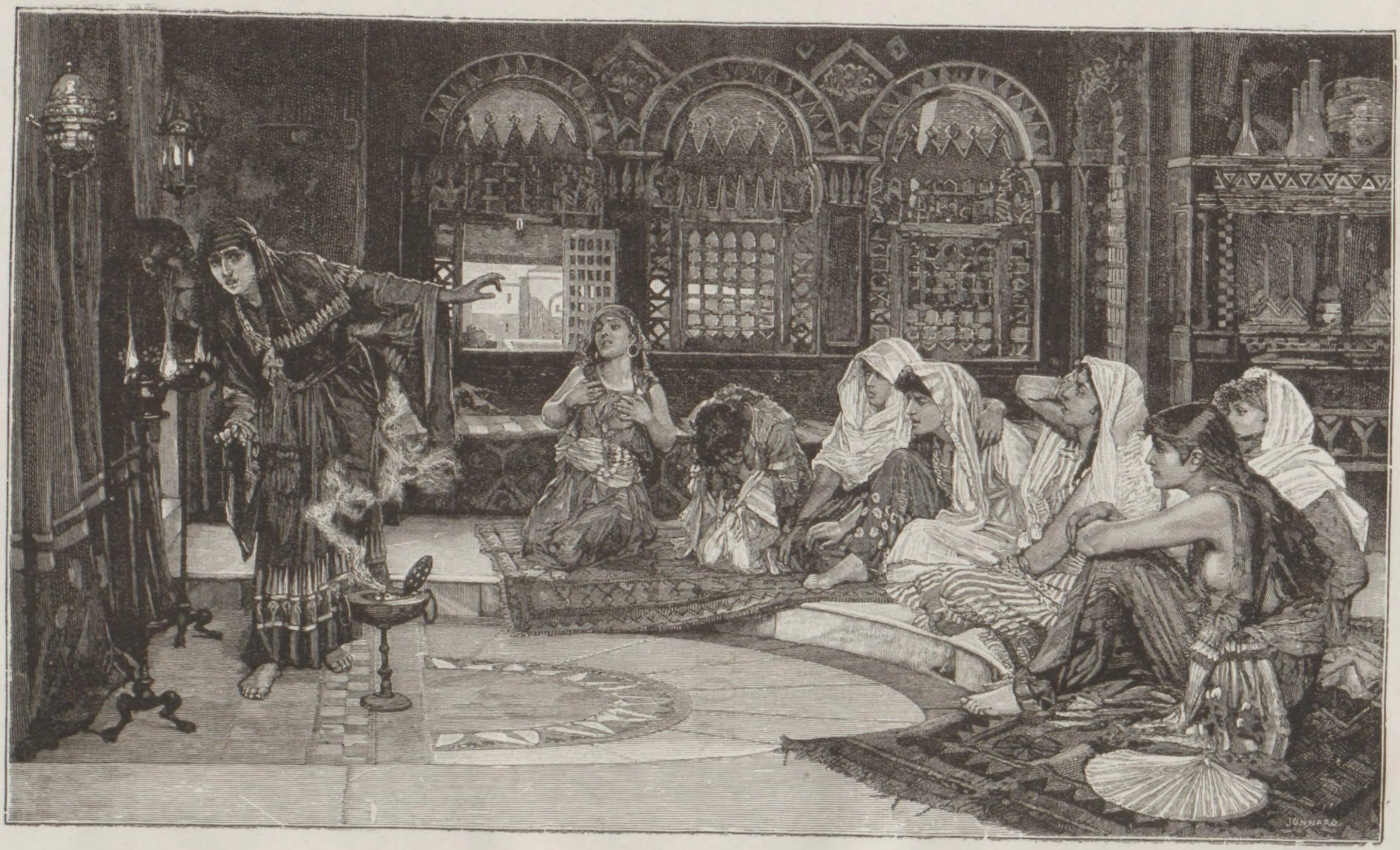

THE ORACLE.

From the painting by J. W. Waterhouse, A.R.A. Royal Academy, 1884.

THE
MOTHERS' COMPANION

VOL. II

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THE MOTHERS' COMPANION.

DORA COYNE; OR, HID IN THE HEART.

BY JESSIE M. E. SAXBY,

Author of "Gerta's Newrsgaf," "Lindeman Brothers," etc.

CHAPTER I.

FOR DUTY'S SAKE.

"I AM sure this is what I ought to do," said Dora Falconer to herself; and she gathered from the table before her a heap of trifles—letters, withered flowers, bits of ribbon—and laid them one by one on the fire, which soon made an end of the whole. Last she took up two photographs and looked long at them. They were the "profile" and "front face" of a young, handsome man. The face was pleasant to look at, although there were indications of temper and pride in its expression.

"I wonder if—if poor 'Kaiser' will ever learn to rule his own spirit," Dora murmured. "I thought at one time that he was really trying hard; but I am afraid he did not set about it in the right way. *My* influence was not enough. Ah, there is no human power strong enough to turn a man from the error of his ways. Well, well! It is all over! I can only pray for him, and hope he will be happy. As for me—it is clear enough what my duty is."

She slowly laid the pictures on the glowing coal, and watched them shrivel and burn, with a very sorrowful look; and as she watched, she nervously turned a handsome new ring round and round upon her finger.

Just then came a tap on the door, and in answer to her somewhat faint "Come in," a girl entered.

She was like Dora in some ways—like enough to show that they were sisters, but the younger girl (the new-comer) was delicate-looking. She had dark rings beneath her eyes, which told of much pain often endured, and there was a patient resignation in her expression, altogether wanting in Dora's animated, healthy face.

Robina sat down and glanced from the burnt fragments on the hearth to Dora's hands, then she asked, very gently, "Are you *quite* sure that you have done right, Dora, my dear?"

"Oh yes, Robina," with a little sigh, "there was nothing else I could do, and I'm sure it will all come pleasant to me shortly, because I know that—that God approves."

"I'll tell you exactly all I've done." p. 2.

"That is the chief thing. But, Doe, are you *quite* sure? Suppose 'Kaiser' should—come back—changed—some day?"

Dora pressed her hands closely together and did not answer at once, and Robina added, "You might regret that you had not waited."

"No," said Dora, decisively. "I have no right to wait for such a possibility. I hope he will come back a better man; but even if he should, he will not come back to *me*. It is all quite done," and she looked down at the ashes of her love's memorials, with a glance that had some contempt, as well as compassion, in it.

There was a short silence, then Dora sat down on the floor, and resting her head on Robina's knee, said—

"I think, dear, I'll just tell you exactly all that I've said and done, and then, after this, we will *never* talk of my—troubles any more; but be—happy ever afterwards!"

"You know, darling, how much I like you to confide in me," was Robina's low-toned and sympathetic answer. She was some years younger than Dora, and Dora in all active matters was the ruling spirit of that house; but it was to Robina that all came for counsel and sympathy. It was Robina who knew how to "calm a storm," how to wake a noble impulse, how to heal a wounded spirit.

"You see," said Dora, "it would have been quite wrong of me to go on thinking about 'Kaiser'—I beg his pardon, *I* must begin to call him 'Mr. Fredrich Wilheim Buist,' as Sir James Coyne does——" (A long pause then.)

"Well—— Oh, Robina, you know I could not have acted differently at the first, could I?"

"You acted quite right. He *wouldn't* give up a bad habit, and he would not allow you to follow your convictions in religious matters. You would have been made unhappy all your life if you had yielded."

"What hurt me was his believing that I did not love him, when in truth it was out of the fulness of love that I tried—oh, I won't say more of *that*. What I meant to tell you was what has happened since. You know the fact of my engagement to Sir James, but perhaps you don't quite understand how I feel about it.

"He is an honourable man, and one we all have much reason to respect. He says he has loved me since I was quite a little girl. He is *the* big man of Hackleton, and can help our boys on in life. And, you know, the rector, and indeed the clergy of all denominations, look upon him as a pillar of the Church. I think it shows he is a true Christian that he helps all the 'good works' in the town, without respect to sect or creed.

"Then it was—nice of him not to come forward while—Ka—Mr. Fredrich Wilheim Buist was about.

"I told Sir James all about—the other, the reasons why we parted, everything! I said that I could not all at once forget the whole of it, but that I was trying to do so, and I felt sure I should conquer my weakness ere long.

"I did not pretend to be in love, and I told Sir James that I could only give him profound respect, admiration, and warm friendship, and he declares himself content with that. Indeed, he affirms that affection such as I confess to is more valuable in his sight than the impulsive, blind love which swamps so many lives.

"He is not the least jealous of Mr. Fredrich Wilheim Buist. He says that young man's love could not have been of the right sort, or he would not have broken with me as he did. I daresay Sir James is right.

"Then, Robina, you remember I have always had a philosophic theory about the 'expulsive power of a new attachment.' I thought—I think the best way to forget my love for—'Kaiser,' is to marry and make myself love Sir James Coyne."

"Don't you mean, make yourself love and then marry?"

"Sir James prefers I should begin the other way."

"I suppose Sir James knows best," Robina remarked in a very thoughtful manner, and the girls were silent for a long time. The white, thin fingers of the younger went softly over the shining hair upon her knee, and once she lifted a brown curl to her lips, whereat Dora looked up with wet eyelashes and quivering lips, but said nothing. While they sat thus reading much of each other's mind, though silent, their mother came in.

She had a way of wandering restlessly about the house, and entering rooms without remembering to knock, but as her coming was always heralded by a sigh, or a nervous tap of the toes, and as she ejaculated over a soiled carpet or broken door-knob, at such times, folks were prepared for her unceremonious advents, and acted accordingly. Dora's eyelashes were quite dry, and Robina's fingers were folded in her lap, when Mrs. Falconer came in.

"I thought I should find you with Dora, Robina," she said, as she took a seat and looked complacently at her elder daughter, but addressed the younger.

"I can scarcely realise our good fortune yet," and the pale, anxious woman cast her eyes on the simple furnishings of the room, then on the plain "sair-wore" garments of her girls.

"What a talk there will be, to be sure! There will be many envious hearts in Hackleton when it is known that my Dora is to be Lady Coyne, of Oldham Grange."

"You shall have that grey silk gown, madre, and the old china, and the hot-house grapes, and everything we have planned for you when our ship should come home," said Dora, in an unsteady voice.

"First of all, dear, we must have the memorial window. Sir James will be pleased to do *that*, I know, for he and your dear father were such friends. Sir James always said he never enjoyed himself so much as when he was listening to your father's sermons. Ah, poor dear! he did preach well, to be sure."

"Father's memorial is in the hearts of his people," said Robina, gently; and Dora added, "And in the actions of his children, I hope."

"Yes, of course. Still it will be a comfort to get the window. Dear me! how things do come round, to be sure, when one waits and does the best one can and trusts in Providence. You know, dears, I always thought that Mr. Buist was not as good a match as Dora with her good looks and talents might——"

The lady stopped, for Dora had looked up and there was a warning in her eyes, a warning which sent her mother off talking on another tack.

"I suppose the Misses Coyne will take a house somewhere near. I wonder what house they will choose."

Dora sat up and looked straight at her mother. "I have expressly stipulated that Sir James's sisters are not to leave Oldham Grange when I go to it," she said.

"Oh, my dear," Mrs. Falconer exclaimed, "isn't that rather—hasty, ill-advised? You can never take your proper place as mistress of the establishment while they remain in it. They are nice in their way, of course, and very fond of Sir James, and I must say they have been courteous to me always, and have taken *the news* as well as we could expect. But still, I don't believe in a young wife going into a house where her husband's sister lives, and has ruled as mistress."

"I shall take my proper place at Oldham, madre, do not fear, but the Misses Coyne will stay. Dear me! The Grange is large enough for us all. I have dwelt in this small house with you, and Robina, and Joe, and Teddie, and the twins, a cat, and two dogs, and a maid, and I haven't quarrelled with anybody. So for certain I shall not knock against any one there, where there must be an average of five rooms to each member of the household. But seriously, madre, I think it would be quite sinful of me to part Sir James from his sisters. Poor Miss Coyne, with all her sharp tongue and queer ways, quite adores her brother, and regulates all her day according to his arrangements or wishes. Then Miss Susan, though she is so silent and self-absorbed, as far as Hackleton is concerned, has plenty of speech and kind deeds for Sir James. She would freeze into a selfish stone if she could not hourly expend herself on him. I've been noticing their ways ever since I was a little girl, when I used to go with father to The Grange, and was allowed to trot about the house while he and Sir James talked. I think I know how to get along with them, at least I mean to try, and—I am sure Sir James will help me. He was very pleased indeed, when I said I wished them to stay."

"It is to be hoped, however, that they will not accept such a sacrifice at your hands, Dora. But I fear, I fear they'll be only too glad to stay on, and then there will be mischief made."

"It takes two to make a quarrel, little mother," said Robina, softly; and Dora added, with a dignity which well became her, "No one but Sir James and I can quite understand things, or judge how we should arrange our *ménage*. I can trust him to think for me, and I am sure he can trust me."

"I am afraid, Dora, *I* shall not be so welcome in your house as I—I thought, if the Misses Coyne are to be there. But it does not matter, that, if only you are happy."

"Dear madre, you will always be my most welcome, most honoured guest. Oh, don't make it harder for me;" and Dora, strangling a sob, stopped short, and almost broke down.

Fortunately Mrs. Falconer did not observe her emotion, but Robina, against whose knee Dora still leant, felt her heart filled with a dim apprehension that all was not exactly as it should be.

However, she said cheerfully, "I agree with Doe, madre. I think she has judged wisely, and I am sure Sir James will appreciate her action in this matter."

"If *you* think it's right, then it must be so," Mrs. Falconer replied with an air of resignation, yielding, as all her family did, to Robina's dictum.

Just then a little curly head was poked in at the door, and a small voice said in a squeaky whisper, "Doe, Doe, the Misses Coyne are in the drawing-room, and they asked for you, instead of madre; come downstairs, my Lady!"

CHAPTER II.

VISITORS FOR DORA.

"As they asked for *you*, Dora, perhaps I had better not go down," said Mrs. Falconer, a little petulantly; "I'm sure I don't want more of their acquaintance than they wish to give me. And they are not so much, after all, in spite of their airs. Their father bought The Grange with money made by trade, and indeed, it was chiefly through *your* father that Sir James got his 'Sir.' Your father advised his being spokesman of a deputation to the Queen, and she knighted him. Yet the Misses Coyne have gone on in Hackleton as if they represented the old county people who owned the place once."

While she was pouring out her spleen in a feeble, small way, Dora was quietly brushing her hair, and otherwise "making herself decent to be seen," as Robina said, when in truth Dora looked "decent" enough even when a little crumpled.

"We'll join you soon, but you had better go alone, dear," said the younger sister, and Dora went gravely downstairs. The Misses Coyne were seated together on a sofa, and had appraised every item in the room during the few minutes they had been there alone. They had noted a valuable china vase which was not there at the time of their last visit. There were some books, in new binding, on the shelf, and two choice little pictures over the mantlepiece; in all of these they recognised their brother's taste, and the knowledge added some stiffness to Miss Coyne's backbone, as well as gave a slight acidity to Miss Susan's expression.

But they stood up graciously enough when Dora came in, and they greeted her kindly, though they thought as they looked at the slight young figure, "Whatever can James see in that child beyond her pretty face? and he never was one that cared for beauty."

Miss Coyne was not less than fifty. Miss Susan might be forty-five or thereabout. Both were decidedly what is known as "old-maidish," and very few people besides their brother and the animals about Oldham Grange saw anything in them beyond that same old-maidishism. Dora Falconer had certainly done a brave thing in proposing to share her home with these two.

"I daresay you did not expect us to call so soon again," said Miss Coyne. "Indeed, we would not have intruded ourselves upon Mrs. Falconer, having made our call last week, if there had not been exceptional circumstances."

"I hope," Dora said, with a sweet, pleading smile, "that exceptional circumstances will often occur to push down the barriers of formal acquaintance between you and my mother, and the rest of us."

"The rules of society are always to be respected even between relatives," said Miss Susan, severely.

Dora scarcely knew what to say after that, but fortunately Miss Coyne speaking removed a difficulty.

"We came," said she, "to let you know that James has told us how pleasantly you have fallen in with his wishes regarding our continuing to reside with him. We thought it very nice of you, my dear."

"I did not wish to change things at Oldham Grange," Dora faltered; and Miss Coyne replied—

"Very sensible of you! And I am sure we shall be a help to each other. You see, Dora, you are young, and you have not been accustomed to managing servants, particularly *men* servants, and all that kind of thing, and we, Susan and I, have always lived with dearest James. It would be very hard to leave him now. And I am sure he feels it would be more than he could endure. I must say, Dora, my dear, that we had not expected you—being so young and inexperienced—to see the matter from its right point of view, and we were prepared to take up house in Hackleton, or its suburbs, probably the suburbs, for we do dislike small towns, and after The Grange—well, I hope Susan and I know better than to stay where we would not be welcome; but James has made us most welcome to remain, and since his—intended wife is so nice about it also we have decided to stay. There is room for us all, my dear. We will just ask to be allowed to keep the blue parlour and the suite next it for our own

use. All the rest of the house we shall of course give over to you."

"There are not going to be two establishments, surely?" Dora exclaimed, in a kind of dismay.

"Oh, dear, no," replied Miss Coyne. "Meals, and carriages, and all that will go on as at present. James would not like to have anything altered in that way. He says no one makes coffee so well as I do, and he requires Susan to cut the paper for him, and to skin an orange when he eats it, which he does every day. But *you* shall take the head of the table, and receive his guests; and when friends call for *us* they can be shown into the blue parlour. I think that is how we said things should be. Isn't it, Susan?"

Miss Susan nodded, but said not a word, and then Dora said—

"I shall be satisfied with any arrangement Sir James makes; he knows my wishes."

"Very nice and proper of you, my dear," replied Miss Coyne, and again Miss Susan nodded, and the girl was beginning to feel herself quite unequal to the occasion, when Sir James himself was announced.

A grave, square man, not tall, but broad and manly, his dark hair considerably grizzled, but wearing his forty years very well indeed.

Dora Falconer had been the mainspring of her home ever since her father's death, and was looked upon by her brothers and sisters as a very mature person, and withal elderly and serious at twenty-three; but, dear-a-me, what a child she seemed beside Sir James and his sisters!

I do not think the man had quite realised the difference in their ages until he saw her just then in sharp contrast to the ladies who were soon to stand towards her in the position of sisters-in-law!

He glanced sharply at the spinsters, and was pleased to see that they were certainly less rigid than usual. Then he took Dora's hand and kissed her in a quiet, fatherly way, and he said—

"I am glad we are all agreed about the future. My sisters will grow young again—as I mean to do—with you in the house, Dora."

His voice lingered tenderly on her name, and she smiled in his face, feeling strengthened by his presence; and at that moment Mrs. Falconer appeared on the scene.

Sir James had sent up his name to *her*, thereby showing rather more tact, and quite as much acquaintance with some social usages as his sisters.

The greater part of his conversation was addressed to Mrs. Falconer, but notwithstanding, he was observant of all Dora said or did, and was gratified at the pains she took to make herself agreeable to his sisters.

The Misses Coyne were not intimate with any of their neighbours, they were not popular in the least, and although their brother and Mr. Falconer were old friends, they did not know the clergyman's family more than as casual acquaintances. Since her father's death, five years previous, Dora's visits to Oldham Grange had been few and far between, and no one had suspected Sir James of being in love with the girl, and no one was more surprised than herself when he proposed.

Naturally, he was not sure how she would "get on" with his sisters, and was anxious as to results. A great many of his fears abated that day, as he noted Dora's sweet little ways of ingratiating herself with her visitors, and saw the ice thawing in Martha's eyes and on Susan's lips as they came under the girl's spell.

(To be continued.)

NEW YEAR MUSIC.

BY MARGARET HAYCRAFT.

"Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."—Joshua i. 9.

ANOTHER year is gone for aye,
Unseen so softly stealing—
In music hath it passed away,
The while the bells were pealing;
And paths untrodden lie before,
But, hushing every fearing,
"*Lo, I am with you evermore,*"
My Saviour's voice is nearing.

What are the changes that await?—
Doth this New Year bring gladness,
Or chalice of a shadowed fate
And secret tears of sadness?
Ere yet these unknown days be o'er,
Will some sweet gift be movèd?
"*Lo, I am with you evermore;*
Have faith in God, belovèd!"

It may be that the rising year
Shall list the angels calling;
Soon, very soon my soul may hear
The Jordan's ripple falling;
How could I take one step before,
Had not the Master spoken—
"*Lo, I am with you evermore;*
Death's fetters I have broken?"

The New Year may hold weariness
And little cares besetting—
The thoughts that woman's heart oppress
And stir the hidden fretting;
But sunlit days and days heartsore
Are all 'neath His controlling—
"*Lo, I am with you evermore*"—
Your cares on Christ be rolling.

My God, I thank Thee for that word,
Thy presence sweet assuring;
All strength is Thine, most tender Lord!
All comfort aye enduring:
More than a mother's thoughts can be,
Of pitying love unfading,
Are Thine, my Master, unto me,—
Stretch forth Thy hand of aiding!

Lead on, lead on, my Father-God!
Oh deepen my confiding;
Lead Thou Thy child by staff, by rod;
My whole heart trusts Thy guiding.
"*Lo, I am with you evermore,*"
Amen. Amen for ever!
Abide with me till Time be o'er,
And change be chiming never.

HINTS ON WINTER AILMENTS.

BY MRS. ATKINS, M.D.

I.—Chronic Cough.

The season for coughs, colds, and other winter ailments is upon us, and possibly some of our readers may be glad of a few hints by which they can keep these enemies at bay. True, many persons will not think it worth while to take precautions which involve some trouble in order to keep off cough or colds; they forget the experience of past years when the running eyes, the swollen nose, the stuffy head, or the continual cough made them a nuisance to themselves and their surrroundings. True, also, that under some circumstances the most scrupulous attention to hygienic rules may not avert these winter ailments; but the wise who have learnt by experience will at any rate try what common-sense precautions will do, holding fast to the time-worn saying that "prevention is better than cure."

The treatment of these ailments when once developed cannot of course be entered upon here, as no physician worthy the name attempts to treat the disease, but always the patient. Moreover, I hope and believe that if the forthcoming hints are judiciously acted upon no treatment of the ailments mentioned will, in the majority of cases, be required, as they simply will not arise.

Many of us who are getting on in life are subject to a winter cough which recurs every year as that season comes round. In some cases, more especially where the disease has lasted for several years, it has to be borne with patiently if the sufferer cannot winter abroad. But in other cases a great deal may be done in the way of prevention if only a little trouble be taken. Ah! that taking trouble, what a stumbling-block it is in our paths!

But winter cough is certainly worth troubling about, not only because of its present discomfort and annoyance to ourselves and others, but because of the certainty with which it will entail disease upon us; for each year that a chronic cough is allowed to develop itself, the lungs suffer, and through the sufferings of the lungs the heart suffers, becoming enlarged and weakened. This sequence of events is as regular as the sequence of the seasons, and when once the stage of enlarged and weakened heart is attained the remnant of life is merely a burden to the patient.

The chief causes of winter cough are: sudden changes of temperature, fogs, cold winds and wet clothes. To prevent the first three is out of our power, but to modify or even annul their influence is certainly possible. As regards the sudden changes of temperature, a complete envelopment of the body in flannel, which is a bad conductor of heat, is one of the most powerful preventatives The flannel need not necessarily be a very thick one, but it must reach from the neck to the wrists and knees, not from the shoulders to the waist, with sleeves about three inches long, as is so frequently

the case. The most delicate part of the lungs is that situated above the collar-bone, and that is the very part most women leave uncovered by flannel; again, if any portion of the body, such as the knees or thighs, or even arms, get thoroughly chilled, the lungs in the predisposed are sure to suffer.

Another important point is carefulness as to outdoor clothing, to see that it is efficient, and that it is not kept on in a warm room if we are going out again into the cold. I quite grant that if we only go in to see a friend for a few minutes it is tiresome to unbutton a long cloak, and take it off. But notwithstanding, the wise woman prone to winter coughs will do it, more especially as a prolongation to half an hour of an intended few-minutes' visit is not an unheard-of circumstance. With delicate children, also, this matter of outdoor clothing in a hot room is very important, and with such it should be made an absolute rule that once out on a cold day the child is under ordinary circumstances to remain out until it is time to go home, thus doing away with the excuse of "we only ran in for a minute," a minute being a very relative term with most people.

A sudden change of temperature from the warm sitting-room to the cold bedroom is only too often in England the starting-point of the dreaded winter cough. The predisposed should never run such a risk, but should always have the fire lighted in their bedrooms three or four hours before going to bed, and on very cold nights they should not even cross the comparatively cold passages of the house without throwing a light shawl over the head and shoulders.

One great mistake made by sufferers from a winter cough is, remaining indoors day after day when the weather is ungenial; and how many days of genial weather are we likely to have during an English winter? Truly, they might almost be counted on the fingers of one hand, for when there is not a fog, or, at any rate, damp, then there is an east wind, and *vice versâ*. Such patients will say that they cannot go out in damp, fog, or east wind, without catching cold, and this is quite true, because they do not take proper precautions.

Now, with due precautions, there is no reason why the most sensitive person should not take exercise on the most ungenial day of our winter. The precautions as to clothing I have already gone into, and will only say further that it is an important matter to start warm and comfortable, for it is often difficult for delicate people to get warm on a cold day. From eleven to one is the best time for a walk, as the only gleam of sun we are likely to have will visit us then, and the day has warmed as much as it ever will. A very important point in the daily walk is that it should in some way be rendered pleasurable, and not undertaken "against the grain." If it be merely considered as a tiresome duty, and the body dragged out to perform its allotted task, the nervous system will be depressed, without energy to react against outside influences, and the first cold blast which touches the shrinking body will penetrate through all the outside wraps, and wreak its vengeance on the vulnerable part.

"We are but children of a larger growth," and we can encourage ourselves, if we will only try, to find some enjoyment even in the rawest day. The late much-lamented Jefferies has written a delightful article on the joys of the east wind, and one cannot doubt from his manner of writing that he meant every word he wrote. Yet he was, I believe, a delicate man all his life, so there is no reason why other delicate people should not find equal enjoyment in the east wind. Possibly someone will arise in the future to celebrate the delights of March dust—but I doubt it! So I return to my original starting-point, and say that if we will only try we can make our daily walk enjoyable or, at any rate, pleasant, and that if we will not try, but insist on regarding it as a tiresome duty, we may as well, nay! better, resign ourselves to the evils of a sedentary life and make the best of them. Those who can combine a well-covered body with a cheerful mind will, however, require another precautionary measure, viz., a respirator. And here I fear most of my readers will absolutely rebel, declaring that respirators are for the consumptive, and they are not consumptive; that they don't mind putting a light shawl over their mouths, and so on. All I answer to this is, "Do as you please, but without a respirator you who are subject to winter coughs cannot go out with safety in an ordinary English winter." The shawl over the mouth, which is considered such a safeguard, is very often worse than useless, as it is so constantly being blown aside, generally at the coldest corners, and is always removed if any speaking has to be done, whereas a respirator cannot be blown aside, need not be removed for conversation, and, moreover, by means of the wires inside, which are warmed by the breath, it takes off the chill of the cold wind before it reaches the lungs. That it is not lovely I quite grant, but still less lovely is the countenance disfigured by a paroxysm of winter cough, with all its unpleasant accompaniments. The kind of respirator is not of much importance, as they are all constructed on the same principle, but Jeffrey's is cheap and easily kept clean.

During the walk there should be no stoppages at shop windows, or for conversations with friends, as such arrest of movements when the body has warmed is fertile of chills. A brisk, even walk as far as possible without causing over-fatigue is the thing to be aimed at.

Immediately on the return home, boots and stockings should be changed, for even in a hard frost some amount of damp will have clung to the sole of the boot, been drawn to the stocking by the warmth of the feet, and the evaporation from the stocking will chill the feet, and is, in fact, the chief cause of the cold feet most people suffer from shortly after they have been for a brisk walk. Any real dampness of the sole will, of course, increase both evaporation and chill, and yet many people think that if the feet be not actually wet, only the soles a little damp, there is no necessity to change the boots. Few fallacies have had more direful results, especially in the case of delicate children, who are often allowed to sit at school with damp boots on, their poor little feet getting colder and colder, whilst the seeds of chilblains, colds, coughs, and even consumption are being sown.

Wet clothes I need scarcely write upon, as everyone knows the danger of sitting in them; but there is one point on which most women are both careless and lazy, and that is the "only-the-bottom-of-the-skirt-wet" point. Just to save themselves the trouble of changing their dress, they will allow their heels and legs to come in contact with the damp lining of the dress for hours, causing discomfort in the healthy and chill in the weakly.

Attention to the excretions of the body is another very important point to sufferers from winter cough. It is said that a man is either a fool or a physician at forty, and possibly the same holds good of a woman. I will therefore take it for granted that most women know how to manage themselves in this respect, and only urge upon them that in case of chronic constipation occurring, they should not indiscriminately drug themselves, but seek the advice of their medical adviser, as this complaint, though easily conquered at first, becomes more and more difficult to cure as time goes on, and is a very important factor where delicacy of the lungs exists.

LADY SALE AND HER FELLOW-HOSTAGES IN AFGHANISTAN.

BY MRS. HENRY FAWCETT.

THE first Napoleon is said to have remarked to Madame de Stael that women had nothing to do with politics; whereupon the lady rejoined that women ought at least to be sufficiently acquainted with political subjects to understand the reason why their heads were cut off. When we read the account of the great sufferings of the English ladies who were held as prisoners or hostages by Akbar Khan in Afghanistan in 1842, we are reminded of Madame de Stael's epigram, and think that they ought at least to have had the consolation of understanding the political meddling and muddling, which led to the prolonged pain and danger to which they were subjected.

Afghanistan is a wild, mountainous country beyond the north-west frontier of the British Empire in India. Its people consist of savage, desperate, lawless tribes, constantly at war with one another; indeed, hardly ever united unless they are attacked by some foreign foe. They are particularly jealous of any kind of foreign influence or interference. Every man among them is bred to arms, even children being provided with dangerous knives; they are trained to great endurance, they are splendid horsemen, and are proficient in many kinds of manly sports and martial exercises; but with these superficially attractive qualities they possess others of a different stamp, for they are treacherous, utterly regardless of truth, revengeful, bloodthirsty, sensual, and avaricious. It will thus be seen that both their good and their bad qualities render them particularly dangerous as foes. The character of their country is very much like their own. It is a land of rocky mountain passes, and a great part of it is savage and sterile. It is separated from India by narrow rocky defiles, the principal one of which, the Khyber pass, is twenty-eight miles long, and runs between lofty, almost perpendicular, precipices; the pass itself is so covered with rocks and boulders that progress along it, even under the most favourable circumstances, must necessarily be very slow. The rocky precipices which command the pass are so steep that they cannot be mounted; but they are perforated by many natural caves, which for centuries have been the strongholds of bands of robbers. It is easy to understand that an army endeavouring to go through this pass is at a terrible disadvantage, and is almost entirely at the mercy of the wild tribes of warriors and robbers who infest the heights.

About 1838-9, there was more than usual of internal fighting between the savage tribes of Afghanistan. Some tribes wished for Dost Mahomed as their king, or Ameer, and others wished for Shaj Soojah. It was considered by those who directed the policy of the British Government in India, a favourable time for us to interfere. It appears to have been thought that we should make the ruler of Afghanistan our friend, if he felt that he owed his throne to our espousal of his cause. It was, however, forgotten that, however much the Afghans quarrelled among themselves, they would forget all past enmities and unite against a foreigner who tried to intervene between them; and they would hate and despise any ruler who owed his nominal sovereignty to the help of foreign soldiers. Therefore, although the English succeeded, in the first instance, in driving away Dost Mahomed and making Shaj Soojah king, they soon found that this first success was the beginning of their difficulties. Sir George Lawrence has told the story in his interesting book called "Forty-three Years of my Life in India," and another narrative of the same events may be found in "Lady Sale's Journal." An Afghan horseman, with whom Sir George (then Major) Lawrence conversed, expressed the feelings of his countrymen and the difficulties of our position in a few words. "What could induce you," he said, "to squander crores of rupees* in coming to a poor rocky country like ours, without wood or water, and all in order to force upon us a kumbukbt (unlucky person) as a king, who, the moment you turn your backs, will be upset by Dost Mahomed, our *own* king?"

However, for a time the English army in Afghanistan did not realise the difficult and dangerous position in which they were placed. Dost Mahomed fled; and not long after he surrendered himself as a prisoner to the English, and was sent, with his wives and children, as a prisoner of war to India. Everybody now thought all trouble and danger were over, and the married officers and men of the English garrison sent for their wives and children to join them at Cabul. Shaj Soojah was established there and received the congratulations of the English. Lawrence, however, observed that the Ameer's own subjects did not join in these congratulations, and moreover Shaj Soojah himself began to show signs of getting tired of his English friends. No special danger was, however, anticipated; the English envoy, Sir W. MacNaghten, was about to leave Cabul, having been appointed to the Governorship of Bombay. Had he left he would have taken Lawrence with him as his secretary. When the preparations for his departure were nearly complete, the clouds that had long been gathering at last burst in storm. The Ghilzye tribe rose in rebellion because they had been deprived of an annual subsidy of £3,000, nominally paid them by Shaj Soojah, but really supplied by the British. This insurrection had the effect of a match applied to a train of gunpowder. The whole of Afghanistan was presently in arms; the safest and most easily defended routes for the return to India were cut off. The insurrection spread to Cabul itself; the houses of the English residents were attacked and burned, the Treasury was sacked, and several officers and men were murdered in the streets. An attempt to send help to the English from Jellalabad was unsuccessful; the Afghans were victorious, and held the small British force entirely in their power.

Sir George Lawrence and Lady Sale complain bitterly of the incapacity of those who were highest in command of the English military operations; they urged that the right thing to have done would have been to take the whole British force into the Bala Hissar, the citadel of Cabul, and hold it against all comers till reinforcements arrived. The time of year was mid-winter, and winter in Afghanistan is intensely severe. To have held the fort would have entailed far less difficulty and danger than to attempt to retreat by the fear-

* A crore of rupees is a million. At that time a rupee was worth 2s.; therefore a crore of rupees would equal £100,000.

ful Khyber pass, the heights of which were held by bands of savage mountaineers. This rash and fatal course was, however, attempted, with the result, now well-known, that of the whole army, with the exception of those who were held by the Afghans as prisoners or hostages, only one man, and he severely wounded, reached Jellalabad alive. Those who have seen Lady Butler's picture, "The Last of an Army," will be able to realise something of what the disaster of the Khyber pass was. Akbar Khan, a son of Dost Mahomed and the leading spirit of the Afghan chiefs, had said that he would destroy the army with the exception of one man who should be left to tell the tale, and he kept his word.

Before this fatal retreat was decided upon, attempts at negotiation with the Afghans were made; Akbar, in particular, had repeatedly demanded that, as a pledge of good faith, the wives and children of the English officers and men should be delivered over to him as hostages. While the English were still in Cabul, this suggestion was naturally rejected with horror. Some officers declared they would rather shoot their wives with their own hands than put them in the power of Akbar. Akbar had shown himself desperately cruel and treacherous. He twice invited the English envoy, Sir W. MacNaghten, outside the encampment to consult with him and other chiefs as to the terms of capitulation. On the first occasion the envoy and his escort returned in safety, but the terms of the treaty agreed upon were, on the part of the Afghans, entirely set at naught. When the second conference was about to take place, the English were treacherously attacked and overpowered, and our envoy was murdered by Akbar with his own hands. It was not very likely therefore that the repeated demand of this man to have the English women and children placed in his control would be listened to, and it was not, in fact, conceded until it became evident that to continue to accompany the ill-fated army in its retreat meant certain death.

The retreat from Cabul began on the 6th January, 1842; the thermometer was ten degrees below zero—far colder than the coldest weather of an ordinary English winter. The night was spent in the open; part of the march had been through snow and slush, which wetted those on foot up to their knees. Lady Sale, who was riding, says her habit was like a sheet of ice. Many died of cold and exhaustion on the first night. The poor Sepoys, accustomed to the warmth of an Indian sun, were unable to handle their muskets, and when attacked by the murderous bands of Afghans that continually pursued the army, were cut down as helplesssly as sheep.

Sir Robert and Lady Sale.

The sufferings of the women and children were terrible. One poor woman had lately been confined. She, as well the others, was exposed to all the horrors of the Afghan winter, and to the chances of dying by the Afghan knife or bullet. Lady Sale, with her daughter, Mrs. Sturt, showed a fine example of courage and endurance. Lawrence said she and all the ladies bore up so nobly and heroically against hunger, cold, and fatigue as to call forth the admiration even of the Afghans themselves. It seems to have been known or rumoured that Akbar would make a special effort to get hold of the women, for Lady Sale and her daughter were advised to disguise themselves as much as possible, and to ride with the men, which they did, riding with Captain Hay's troopers. On the second day of the retreat they were heavily fired upon, Lady Sale was wounded, her daughter's horse was shot under her, and her son-in-law, Captain Sturt,

was mortally injured. Let anyone who likes to dwell on "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war" look on the reverse side of the picture. Captain Sturt had received a severe wound in the abdomen, from which it was from the first certain he could not recover. He was in great agony; it was impossible to move him without increasing his sufferings, equally impossible that he should not be moved. He was placed in a kind of rough litter, the jolting of which was a terrible aggravation of his pain. At night he lay on a bank in the snow, suffering from intolerable thirst; the water for which he craved could only be supplied, a few spoonfuls at a time, because his wife and mother had no means of getting a larger quantity. Those who have known what it is, even in the midst of every home comfort, to stand by the death-bed of those they love, can best imagine what it was to Lady Sale and her daughter to see the anguish and death of their son and husband under such circumstances as these. The horrors of the retreat became worse and worse. All the baggage was lost, and the whole road was covered with men, women, and children lying down in the snow to die.

Again Akbar renewed his demand for the women and children, and this time he urged it on grounds of humanity. It now appeared certain that the only chance of saving their lives was to accept Akbar's proposals. Nine ladies, twenty gentlemen, and fourteen children were accordingly made over to him as prisoners or hostages. It is true that he assured them that they were to consider themselves his honoured guests, and that on the whole he behaved well to them, but their sufferings while in his charge were very considerable. They believed themselves to be in constant danger of death, or else that they would be sold as slaves and sent to Bokhara. All their arms and means of defence were taken from them, and they were but too well acquainted with the treacherous and cruel nature of the man whose prisoners they were.

The most noticeable feature of Lady Sale's journal is its buoyant courage and cheerfulness. The forty-three persons of whom the hostages consisted were reinforced by the birth of three infants, one of which was Mrs. Sturt's, and consequently was Lady Sale's grandchild. They were eight and a half months in captivity. Their accommodation very often consisted of no more than two small rooms among the whole party. Lady Sale speaks of being lodged twenty-one in a room fourteen feet by ten feet; another time thirty-four persons had to share a room only fifteen feet by twelve feet; sixteen persons, of both sexes and all ages, shared one small room for a long time. Lady Sale and her daughter—indeed, most of the captives—had lost everything but the clothes they stood in. Yet, in the midst of all the discomfort and danger to which the party was exposed, there is seldom a word of complaint in Lady Sale's journal which she wrote at the time, and more often than not their hardships are turned into matter of laughter and merriment. The retreat from Cabul was begun, it will be remembered, on January 6th; on the 9th the ladies and children, with twenty gentlemen, among whom was Major Lawrence, were made over to Akbar Khan; not until January 18th were they established in permanent quarters in the fort of Buddeeabad. The journal for January 19th begins: "We luxuriated in dressing, although we had no clothes but those on our backs; but we enjoyed washing our faces very much, having had but one opportunity of doing so since we left Cabul. It was rather a painful process, as the cold and glare of the sun on the snow had three times peeled my face, from which the skin came off in strips." Major Lawrence describes the rooms assigned to the ladies as "miserable sheds full of fleas and bugs." But even these and worse trials to the temper were good-humouredly encountered. "It was above ten days," Lady Sale wrote, "after our departure from Cabul before I had an opportunity to change my clothes, or even to take them off and put them on again and wash myself; and fortunate were those who did not possess much live stock. It was not till our arrival here (near Cabul, almost at the end of their captivity) that we completely got rid of *lice*, which we denominated infantry;

"One man left to tell the tale."

the fleas, for which Afghanistan is famed, we called light cavalry." The food served out to the prisoners was the reverse of appetising: greasy skin and bones, boiled in the same pot with rice, and all served together, was a usual dish. Lady Sale describes a kind of bread made of unpollarded flour mixed with water, and dried by being set up on edge near a fire. "Eating these cakes of dough," she says, "is a capital recipe for heartburn." The bad cooking they remedied by obtaining leave to cook for themselves.

One of the chief alleviations of their lot consisted—so far, at least, as the ladies were concerned—in work; they were supplied with calico, chintz, and other materials, and were most thankful, not only for the clothes which they were thus enabled to make, but also for the occupation the work afforded. The ladies also cheerfully bore their part in other kinds of work, and became laundresses, cooks, and housemaids, and, in one instance, carpenters and masons for the nonce. The choice of rooms being very limited, one was allotted to Lady Sale and her companions which had no windows, and consequently no means of getting air and light except what came through the door. "We soon *set to*," writes Lady Sale, "and by dint of hard working with sticks and stones, in which I bore my part, assisted by Mr. Melville, until both of us got blistered hands, we knocked two small windows out of the wall, and thus obtained 'darkness visible.'" Lady Sale had permission to correspond with her husband, General Sir Robert Sale, who was conducting vigorous measures against the enemy at Jellalabad. Lady Sale was very proud of her husband, and mentions with evident delight the nickname of "Fighting Bob" which his soldiers had given him. Any recognition of his deserts gave her keen satisfaction. She refers to the presentation of a sword to him as "the only thing that has given me pleasure," although at that time her praises were upon everybody's lips. She was so thoroughly a soldier's wife that she understood military tactics: before she left Cabul she speaks of taking up a post of observation on the roof of the house, "as usual," in order to watch the military movements that were going forward. She says she understood the plan of attack as well as she understood the hemming of a handkerchief; therefore she diligently wrote an account of everything of importance to her husband. These letters were so important for the military and political news they contained that they were often forwarded to the Commander-in-chief, to Lord Auckland, the Governor-general, and to the Court of Directors of the East India Company.

The principal danger to which the prisoners were exposed, next to the ferocity and treachery of Akbar Khan's character, arose from the extraordinary frequency of earthquakes in the region in which they were confined. Lady Sale is one of the very few human beings who has ever made such an entry in a journal as this: "March 3rd and 4th. Earthquakes as usual." Under other dates such expressions as "Earthquakes in plenty" are frequent; and hardly less significant is the entry, under the date of April 19th, "No earthquakes to-day." The earthquakes were of a most formidable character. Lady Sale had a narrow escape of destruction from one which took place in February. She was on the roof of the room she lived in, hanging out some clothes to dry, when the whole building began to rock; she felt the roof was giving way, and rushed down the stairs, just in time to save her life, as the building fell with an awful crash the instant she left it. Lawrence writes: "We all assembled in the centre of the court, as far from the crumbling walls as possible, ... when suddenly the entire structure disappeared as through a trap-door, disclosing to us a yawning chasm. The stoutest hearts among us quailed at the appalling sight, for the world seemed coming to an end."

Almost the only angry words that appear in Lady Sale's journal are caused by attempts of the officers to negotiate a ransom for themselves and the rest of the party, without consulting the ladies as to the terms to be agreed upon. Women's suffrage had not been much talked of in 1842, but Lady Sale appeared to hold that taxation and representation ought to go hand in hand; for she says, "A council of officers was held at the general's regarding this same ransom business, which they refer to Macgregor. I protest against being implicated in any proceedings in which I have no vote." In the end the Indian Government paid the sum that it was agreed to give to Saleh Mahomed for effecting the deliverance of the prisoners. Another source of irritation to Lady Sale was the dread lest the military authorities should hesitate to proceed vigorously against the Afghans at the right moment because it might endanger the lives of the hostages. "Now is the time," she wrote on the 10th May, "to strike the blow, but I much dread dilly-dallying just because a handful of us are in Akbar's power. What are *our* lives compared with the honour of our country? Not that I am at all inclined to have my throat cut: on the contrary, I hope I shall live to see the British flag once more triumphant in Afghanistan."

Allusion has already been made to her power of extracting grim fun out of the discomforts of the situation. The Afghans are great thieves, and one of the minor troubles of the captives lay in the fact that their captors calmly appropriated articles sent to the prisoners. They took possession of a case in which Lady Sale had left some small bottles. "I hope," she writes, "the Afghans will try their contents as medicine, and find them efficacious: one bottle contained nitric acid, another a strong solution of lunar caustic." Twice she was incapacitated by severe attacks of fever, which had proved fatal to several of the party; but her courage never deserted her; and she shook off fever and all other ills when she heard her husband was near. Saleh Mahomed had already agreed, for a sum of money, to remove them from Akbar's power, and they had left the place in which they had been confined; but Akbar would probably have recaptured them had not Sir R. Sale and Sir R. Shakespear with their brigades joined them just at the nick of time.

Who can tell what the meeting must have been between the gallant husband and wife? The narrative can best be given in Lady Sale's own words: "Had we not received assistance, our recapture was certain. . . . It is impossible to express our feelings on Sale's approach. To my daughter and myself happiness, so long delayed as to be almost unexpected, was actually painful, and accompanied by a choking sensation which could not obtain the relief of tears. When we arrived where the infantry were posted, they cheered all the captives as they passed them, and the men of the 13th" (her husband's regiment) "pressed forward to welcome us individually. Most of the men had a little word of hearty congratulation to offer each in his own style on the restoration of his colonel's wife and daughter; and then my highly-wrought feelings found the desired relief; I could scarcely speak to thank the soldiers for their sympathy, whilst the long-withheld tears now found their course."

ERASMUS wrote, "There is nothing more unnaturally wicked than war, nothing more productive of misery, more extensively destructive, more obstinate in mischief, more unworthy of man as formed by nature, much more as professing Christianity."

A STORY OF TWO NEW YEARS' EVES.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY MARY E. ROPES.

THERE was a great and festive gathering on New Year's Eve, at the town mansion of Count Kooshanoff, some twenty years ago. Every window facing the Neva blazed with light, attracting the attention of the passers-by up and down the Palace Quay of St. Petersburg. And within, the glow of colour and the gleam of jewels, the scent of flowers, the ravishing strains of music and the graceful measures of the dance, made the rooms a very fairy-land. The Count and Countess had given the entertainment in honour of their only child, their son and heir, Alexay Simionovitch, who completed his tenth year on this day.

The gaiety was at its height when two servants in livery entered the largest drawing-room, carrying an oblong box, the top of which, for about twelve inches from the end, consisted of wire gauze. The men deposited the box upon a table, then the elder of the servants approached the Countess and said something in a low tone. She nodded, and answered, "Very well; open it at once, Ivan."

The man undid two steel hooks and raised the lid of the box, while the Count and Countess and their guests pressed round to see what charming New Year's gift this wooden case might contain.

At first there was nothing to be seen but a dainty white muslin cover, edged with lace, but when this was raised there was a general exclamation of amazement, for there, dressed in a long robe of the finest cambric and Valenciennes trimming, was a lovely little two-month-old baby girl, fast asleep, and as sweet and placid-looking as though in her cradle at home.

As soon as the astonishment had somewhat subsided the Count made inquiries and learned that the box had been brought in a carriage, by a stranger-gentleman, who said that it contained a New Year's gift for the Count and Countess Kooshanoff, and that it was to be opened at once. The carriage had then been driven rapidly away, and the servants had not the remotest idea whither it went.

"Well, and what shall we do with the baby?" asked the Countess, turning to her husband. But before the Count could answer, little Alexay, who had been earnestly gazing into the tiny face of the wee maiden, cried out—

"I'll tell thee, mamasha! Keep her! I want her for my little sister!"

"The child has settled the question," laughed the Count. "The Tzar himself is no greater autocrat than our boy, bless him! As his wish is, so let it be."

So the new year's gift was accepted, and room was made for the baby in the home and hearts of those who had adopted her. As for the young despot Alexay, his devotion to the little one was only equalled by his utter indifference to every one else, while his imperious will and turbulent temper bade fair to set a bad example to the little sister when she should be old enough to appreciate it.

Nor did the young heir's character improve with time. Indeed, as the years went by the boy's insubordination became such that his father was compelled to dismiss his tutor and send Alexay to a military college, where the discipline was strict and obedience compulsory.

Little Olga, or Ollia, as she was generally called, nearly blinded herself with crying for her adopted brother, for hers was a loving, faithful little heart, and she warmly returned the affection which the wayward youth had shown for her.

Time flew quickly on, and the child developed into a lovely girl of fifteen, with a bright, frank, sunny nature which endeared her to every one. The Count and Countess loved her as though she had been their child, carefully keeping from her the fact that she was not their own daughter, while the old servants who remembered that memorable New Year's Eve, were as silent as their master and mistress.

Well would it have been for the Count and Countess had their son given them as little anxiety as their adopted daughter. But the impatient, disobedient boy had become a rash, excitable, passionate man. While at college he had been the centre of every disturbance, the ringleader of disorder and mutiny, and since his student life had come to an end there had been rumours that, during his frequent absences from home he had contracted dangerous acquaintances, joining the ranks of those who plotted mischief against the government, and were well nigh ripe for revolt.

New Year's Eve was always kept by the Kooshanoffs as Olga's birthday, and now the fifteenth anniversary had come. The family were not in St. Petersburg this time; the Count's health had been poor of late, and the air in the city did not agree with him. So to one of his estates in the country the large household had migrated, and there quietly settled down.

There could be no gaiety this year, for there were hardly any neighbours near enough to accept an invitation; but Ollia had had a very happy, if a quiet, day, rejoicing in the beautiful gifts which had been presented to her. And now evening had come, and she was hoping that her brother would soon arrive to make her happiness complete.

But leaving Ollia to her pleasant reflections and anticipations, let us take a peep at the interior of a little cottage, the home of a worthy couple, the Count's woodcutter and his wife. The cottage stood in the heart of the forest that formed a part of the estate; and just now good Fedosia was preparing supper for herself and her children. Her husband had gone to the big house with a load of wood on a sledge-cart, and would not be home till late. The good woman was about to lift from the stove a pot of sour cabbage soup that sent forth a savoury odour, when there came a sharp tap at the door.

"Open, good mother," cried a voice that she knew, and she threw the door open and admitted Alexay Simionovitch, who was accompanied by a dark-eyed, middle-aged man.

"Our sledge waits in the road, Fedosia, and we shall start for home directly," said Alexay; "but we are cold, having driven a long way. We will just warm ourselves here, if we may, and you shall give us a light for our cigars when we go."

Fedosia, who had been a servant in the Kooshanoff family, and was much attached to each member of it, was only too proud of the honour of her young master's visit. Alexay chatted with her for about a quarter of an hour;

then he and his friend said good-night, and drove away.

She had hardly tidied up her kitchen and got things straight for the night when there came another knock at the cottage door, and when she opened it she was startled to see standing there a band of armed police.

"Tell me, *Matooshka*," said one who appeared to be the chief, "hast thou seen aught, during the past hour, of two gentlemen in a sledge?"

"What kind of looking people might they be, Barrin?" asked Fedosia, who was keen witted enough not to answer the question directly.

"One is middle-aged—one young," replied the officer. "And, hark you, good woman, there is a reward of five hundred roubles (about £50) offered to anyone who gives information that will lead to their being taken."

Fedosia gave a great gasp. The thought of so great a sum quite took her breath away. Five hundred roubles! Why, that would be a fortune! Enough to make her rich for many a year to come, and all to be got by saying a few words; for well enough she guessed that Alexay Simionovitch and his companion were the two men wanted by the police.

But these thoughts lasted only one brief moment. In the next the hot flush of shame mounted to her brow.

The officer watched her narrowly, saw the confused look, and attributing it to stupidity turned to his followers, saying, "Come, *zebiata* (children), it is little use wasting time and words on this woman. Had she any news to sell, it would have come out ere now. Five hundred roubles grow not on every wild raspberry bush. Forward! to Count Kooshanoff's."

Another minute, and they were gone.

Fedosia's thoughts were now no longer in confusion.

"How can I convey a warning to Alexay Simionovitch?" she asked herself; "for, if he has it not, the police will assuredly find him, and his parents' hearts will be broken, and the heart of the dear little Barashui, too."

She sat down and thought for a minute. Then she jumped up and began to dress herself in her warm winter coat, and a thick shawl over her head, after the manner of the Russian peasant women. She glanced at the children; they were both asleep, and she could safely leave them. The distance by the road to the great house was fully three miles, but she knew of a short cut through the wood, by which she could get there in half an hour or less. There was no time to lose. Noiselessly she slipped out, locking the door behind her, and away she sped over the snow, down the foot-path through the depths of the forest. Faster and faster she went, lest the police officers should arrive ere the warning could be given. Breathless and exhausted, she reached the house at last, begged to see the Count and Countess, and told her news, adding that there must be real danger, as a reward of five hundred roubles had been offered for the apprehension of the gentlemen; and that unless Alexay Simionovitch and his friend could escape from the house and hide at once, there would be no chance for them.

"Fedosia is right," said the Count; "alas, that our son should have exposed himself to such danger by his conduct!"

"If I might venture to propose a plan, Barrina," said Fedosia, turning to the Countess, "it would be this—let your son be dressed in a woman's cloak and shawl, and let him accompany me at once back to my cottage, by the secret path through the woods. My husband will be following by the road very soon, in his sledge-cart. The other gentleman had better get into the cart, and there, covered with a piece of *Machalka* (straw matting), he would be safe enough; my husband will set him down wherever he likes."

"It is a good plan, Fedosia, and I thank thee," replied the Countess. "Our son can return here when the pursuit is over. As for his friend—"

"His friend, Countess, will trouble you no more," said a deep voice behind them, for Alexay's companion, Matvey Philipitch, had heard what was said.

"I came here to-night," he added, "for a special purpose, and that purpose has been accomplished, for I have seen one whom I hardly hoped to see again. When I am gone, read a paper that I have left for you; that will explain all. But it is time that your son was on his way with this good woman, and that I, too, was thinking of flight. Farewell, my good, kind friends! To my dying day I shall bless you for the part you have acted towards me and mine. Nay, look not so astonished; the letter will show all."

Then Matvey Philipitch kissed the Countess' hand, bowed to the Count, and, seeing Ollia standing near, took her in his arms and kissed her on the forehead, much to her amazement. Then with a husky "*Bach Staboi*" (God be with thee!) he was gone.

The police arrived in due course, and were allowed to search the house, with what success may be conjectured.

Not until they were gone did the Count and Countess read the paper left for them by the stranger. What was their

surprise, to find that their visitor was the father of their adopted child. For many years, he told them, his life had been one of trouble and danger. He had been grievously wronged by Government, and, in revenge, had joined the Revolutionists. Little Olga was born just when circumstances had made it necessary that, for a time, he and his wife should quit Russia. The question arose, what to do with the infant, and the parents decided to send her to the Count and Countess (whom they knew by reputation), feeling sure that the child would be in kind hands, and safe in case anything happened to her father and mother. The letter ended in a promise that he, the writer, would use all his influence to induce Alexay to renounce all connection with the party of which he himself was one; and he suggested that a tour abroad for a year would be the best means of severing the ties lately made by the young man.

The next news of Matvey Philipitch Prasovkin, was that he had at last been arrested by the secret police, and exiled to Siberia; a fate which did something towards warning Alexay, and cooling his ardour for the Nihilist cause.

As for good Fedosia, whose fidelity had been proof against so great a temptation, she felt more than amply rewarded when, on New Year's day, the Countess herself drove round to the woodcutter's cottage, and handed her as a New Year's gift, five hundred roubles, in a leather pocket-book, in recognition of her devotion and of the important services she had rendered.

We are happy to say that Alexay, when last we heard of him, had given up his dangerous friends and questionable pursuits, and had settled down quietly on one of his father's estates. A rumour was being circulated that he was about to marry his adopted sister. Whether there was any foundation for this we are unable to say, but we are inclined to think that he could hardly do better.

GIRLS.

BY SARAH TYTLER.

X.—The Good a Girl can Do.

In the good which girls can do they have sometimes been public benefactresses. To a girl named Christian Shaw, a Scotch laird's daughter, who spun fine flaxen thread, and bleached it on the roof of her father's house, the thread trade of the great town of Paisley is said to be owing. To another young woman, Meg or Margaret Carnegie, belonging to the noble house of Southesk, Scotland is believed to be indebted for two industries—the introduction into the country of the weaving of "hollands"—the finer sort of linen—and the manufacture of pot-barley. But, no doubt, it is not given to many girls to bring their food from afar, or to do something strikingly out of the common. Let them but bear in mind that character is infinitely before intellect, and

"Do noble things, not dream them all day long."

King Solomon likened the daughters of Jerusalem to "the polished corners of the temple," and in this light a girl lends a grace to a whole house. Her winning ways, sweet gifts, and pleasant accomplishments are all so many sources of adornment to the home, which becomes blank, humdrum, wellnigh cheerless when she is gone.

Girls have taken helpless babies from the arms of dying mothers, and played the parts of mothers, with all the lengthened sacrifice implied in such acts. Other girls in their youthful bloom have retired without a murmur into the shadow of sick-rooms, and there, discharging the sacred offices of tender, faithful nurses, have spent the best—that is, the most vigorous and ardent—period of their lives. Like plants growing in semi-darkness, they have faded and drooped a little; but, as is known of many such plants, the fragrance distilled from them has far transcended the perfume bred in the open air and the sunshine.

A great literary man of the past generation was so deficient in all power of transacting business that the deficiency amounted to a mental flaw. His good and beautiful wife was unable to check and guide him. His affairs were chronically embarrassed. The family had to maintain a hand-to-hand struggle with debt and difficulty. The mother died. The Herculean task of keeping such a house, and saving it from sinking into an abyss of penury and disgrace, devolved on a clear-headed, energetic girl of twenty. The father put everything into her hands, and relied upon her. From that moment the words debt and difficulty ceased to be heard and feared in the family. She paid her father's debts by degrees from his modest literary income. She transported the whole family to a home in the country, where living was then a much simpler and more economical matter than it was in a town. When she married, she left hands that she had trained to the duty to take up the relinquished sceptre in a kingdom into which she had.

by her energy, brought honour, peace, and comfort.

Once upon a time there dwelt in a large town one of those mysterious families whose resources are unknown, who spend largely and pay little or nothing, yet continue living on for an indefinite term of years, indulging themselves in every whim, and apparently supported by a confiding, much-enduring public. Of course, unless "something happens," such a career has only one end; but in certain cases, where there is, doubtless, the skill of extensive practice, and the audacity of not an atom of conscience in the matter, the end is long in coming. There is this to be said in excuse for the family referred to—that they belonged to a class and came from a region in which the dominant members of the community have till recently been accustomed to behave as if their social inferiors were born to serve them, or were honoured in being permitted to exercise their calling. In this family, amidst its unprincipled extravagance and cruel wrong done to others, there grew up a girl whose whole life was a protest against the lives of her near neighbours. She was born with a heritage of genius; but she did not make that an apology for neglecting the ordinary obligations of everyday life. She rose early, and studied and worked hard, day after day, steadily advancing in the path which would enable her to support herself as well as to win laurels. She did not despise homely services; indeed, she ministered to her family in every way in which she could do so without blame; and to their credit, they recognised her worth, and looked up to her, though they did not follow her example. She made her own frocks with her clever hands, so as to lessen one heavy bill among the showers of bills which were always threatening the head of the house. The servants—those domestic drudges who could not get more than a fraction of their wages, could not leave the establishment because by doing so they might lose the chance of recovering what was due to them, and could not take legal proceedings to get their own because they feared still more than the legal expenses the danger of forfeiting their characters—in the bitter invectives launched against the master and mistress of the house, and other members of the family, always spared this girl. She did her best; if it rested with her, all would be well. And she came out clean from the moral defilement of such an unhappy situation.

A large family, the children of a professional man in a country town, were left orphans, the eldest being a girl of little over twenty. There was some money secured for the children, enough to educate the younger ones, and they had friends interested in their welfare, and ready to act as their guardians. These friendly relatives met after the funeral of the father, and agreed the best thing for all was that the eldest daughter should go out as a governess, the eldest son try for a situation as a clerk at home or abroad, and the younger boys and girls be boarded in suitable schools.

There was one voice which dissented from what seemed the most natural and proper, indeed, the only practicable arrangement. It was the voice of the girl in the black frock, who was old enough to be taken into the counsels of the seniors, since she was about to be launched on the world on her own accord. She spoke with a swelling heart, as one may guess, of the happy security and freedom of the home which the family had lost, and of all the advantages it had held for those who had been reared in it. Then she added with earnest directness of speech, "If everything is done as you propose, my young brothers and sisters will never know what it is to have a home; we shall all be separated early in life; we shall not even be like one family."

It is easy to imagine the baffling effect of this speech, and the dry reply it provoked when somebody felt bound to reply. Where was the money to come from to maintain such a home? Surely the children must be educated, and made fit to help themselves—*that* was of more consequence than the sentimental consideration of keeping them together.

"I will explain," said the girl, eagerly. "If I am a governess I shall not need any of the little money we have; that is about the utmost benefit I can confer. I have no experience. My education, though good of its kind, was got in a country town, and as I am not exceptionally accomplished, I cannot hope for a high salary. I shall not get much more than will keep me in dress (probably I shall be expected to dress well), pay my travelling expenses, and defray my board in the holidays. I shall be able to do little or nothing for the others. But if you will trust me, and let part of the money which you have reserved for the children's use, be laid out in getting me trained as a first-class dressmaker, and in buying the good-will of a business with which I can start after I am trained, I pledge myself, if life and health are granted to me, not only to support myself, but to provide a home for my younger brothers and sisters. I am their natural protector, and they are all at home with me. Ask them, and they will tell you. Even Jem," naming the brother who was to look out for a clerk's situation, "might live with us, and go to his office from our house," she finished wistfully.

"My dear Annie, you do not know what you are saying," remonstrated one of the listeners, and be sure this was a woman. "You would quite go out of your rank, you would lose your position; none of your old acquaintances would acknowledge you any longer. Your father's and mother's daughter, a common dressmaker! How could you think of such a thing?"

"Because, Aunt Jane," said the girl, steadily, "I don't really mind, neither does Jem, nor any of the younger ones who can understand, what people call loss of caste in becoming a dressmaker; so long as it is respectable I do not much care whether the trade is genteel or ungenteel. Besides, I do not mean to be 'a common dressmaker'"—a little smile lighting up the gravity of her face for an instant. But I cannot bear, if it is possible to help it, that we should all be scattered to the four winds, that my dear father's pet Susie, and my dear mother's little mannikin Jack, and Willie, and Kate, and Agnes should be cast adrift even into good schools. Why, some of them would not so much as retain the remembrance of what a blessing it is to have a home and friends of one's own."

Happily some of the elder people who heard her plead, were wise enough to judge that a girl who could so reason might be safely entrusted with the responsibility which she craved, and with the welfare of those nearest to her. The self-elected guardians of the family did as the eldest daughter besought them to do. They had her trained as a dressmaker, and bought a business for her. What was the result? The business was so carefully and skilfully conducted that from the first it brought in a comfortable income. The younger members of the family were lovingly cared for and well educated. The sons were fitted out and established in business and in professions, according to their qualifications and wishes. By the time little Susie was woman-grown (I am telling a true story) a sufficient competence had been secured to enable the sisters to retire from business, and live as ladies of modest but independent means, who could afford to stretch out kind and helpful hands to the sick and needy.

TRADE COMBINATIONS FOR WOMEN.

BY CLEMENTINA BLACK.

THE whole position of women has undergone a serious change in the course of the last fifty years; and in no respect is this change more visibly marked than in the increased number of women earning their own livelihood in different professions and trades. Many persons are apt to regret this change, and to sigh, like Mr. Walter Besant in his new little story "Katharine Regina," for a good time coming, when no woman shall work for hire, and each shall have some man to provide for her. For my own part, I am glad to think that that so-called good time has retreated for ever into the past, and that the whole tendency of modern life is in the other direction.

But whether we rejoice or whether we lament, we must acknowledge the change, and perceive that in actual fact a large proportion of our women do and must depend upon the work of their own brains and hands. This being so, we shall all, I think, agree in desiring that the conditions under which they work shall be as good as possible, which we all know is very far indeed from being the case at present. Some time ago the working men found the way to better their position, and this way has been by combination. They have formed voluntary unions, in which each worker engages not to take less than a certain rate of payment or work more than a certain number of hours, and where each, by paying a small weekly sum, becomes entitled to a far larger one, in case of being ill or out of work.

In 1874 Mrs. Paterson, who had been secretary of the Workmen's Club and Institute, and had become the wife of a cabinet-maker, started the first trades union for women. This (the Society of Women Employed in Bookbinding) still exists and prospers. At the same time a Society (the Women's Protective and Provident League) was formed, of which she acted as honorary secretary. This Society consists of persons interested in the formation of women's unions, and willing to assist in starting and encouraging them. When once a union is established, it is supported solely by the subscriptions of its own members, and is managed by them. The subscriptions are generally twopence or threepence a week; the benefits in sickness or want of work, five or six shillings during eight weeks of the year, if required so long. The Protective and Provident League, however, whose business it is to defray the expenses of starting new unions, of carrying the movement into fresh districts, printing handbills and papers, and publishing a monthly journal, is supported by subscriptions. Its work is too little known, and the number of women benefiting by the unions is sadly small in proportion to the whole number employed in trades through the kingdom.

There are other advantages in addition to the out-of-work and sick benefits. Members out of work can see at the office those newspapers in which most trade advertisements appear, and they can also often hear of work there. Some employers send to the office when they want hands, and members in work who hear of a vacant place do not fail to let the secretary know of it; so that it may happen that a member, who comes down to sign her name in the out-of-work book, may hear of some opening, and go straight from the office to fresh work. Again, another advantage is the opportunity afforded of meeting and knowing other women at work in the same trade, but in some other shop. Women have too few opportunities of coming together and getting to know each other's views and wishes. They have not, as men have, meeting places where they can sit and talk. If a woman goes into, say, a Lockhart's tea-room, she must drink her tea, pay her penny, and go away. It would be an immense comfort to many of the solitary workers in our towns if they could have some peaceful room, with light and fire, where, for perhaps a penny a week, they could come any evening that they chose, bring their work or their book, or read the three or four newspapers that might be provided. Some such comfortable place as this the League is now trying to procure (among other things) in the proposed memorial hall to Mrs. Paterson.

The main purpose of this scheme is to provide a large central hall for the trade meetings and other gatherings, but it is hoped that a club and reading-room for women may be included. Several generous promises have been received, and among the large donors is Miss Florence Nightingale, who has long been one of the League's friends, and who wrote a letter, which has been printed, praising the scheme and asking the public to assist it. The present premises of the League are very centrally situated at the Industrial Hall, Clark's Buildings, Broad Street, W.C., within a hundred yards or so of St. Giles's Church. They are, however, too small for all that the League wants to do in them, and in particular they are too small for the number of members and their friends who come to the social meetings that are given on the first Monday evening of the winter months. The hall can accommodate about seventy, but these meetings are so attractive that many more would be glad to attend them.

The Provident League also possesses a good circulating library, containing from 1400 to 1500 volumes. The subscription to this is sixpence for three months for members, and ninepence for outsiders. In the early autumn of each year, a house at the seaside has generally been taken, through the kindness of some friends, and members of the Societies have been able to go and stay there at very reduced rates. The charge has generally been four or five shilling a week for members, and six shillings a week for outsiders. Then there is the Women's Union Swimming Club, which meets once a week through the warm season, provides a professed teacher, and finishes its season with a grand competition. In the summer, too, occur the annual excursions of the different societies, and very enjoyable indeed are the days thus spent in the open air to those whose work keeps them on other days in workrooms in the hot London streets.

These various events are duly chronicled in the newspaper of the League, the *Women's Union Journal*, which comes out on the 15th of each month, and costs one and sixpence a year, post free. We hope before long to record in it that one good scheme, which has been abandoned for a time, has been taken up again. This is the co-operative store, which flourished for some time and seems now likely to be started afresh with larger numbers. Every woman working at a trade should belong to a union. Even if she herself has a good permanent place and is well paid, she cannot be sure never to be disabled by illness; and even if she could be sure of that, she should join for the sake of the strength and comfort which the unions give to those who are less fortunate. Those who do not work themselves can on their part help forward the general cause of working women by spreading among them a knowledge of these societies.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

THERE is nothing very novel about fashion this winter, most of the thick materials are tailor made, and it is the only style of making that redeems them from awkwardness. A great many are sold with stripes of two shades for the skirts, and a plain fabric to match one or the other for the bodice and drapery, and when these stripes are not exaggerated they look very nice indeed. Serge is just a little less used than it has been, and tweeds and heather mixtures are more in favour. A thick vicugna is also frequently made up, and it falls very softly and gracefully, and is much lighter in weight than most winter materials. The dress shown in our sketch is the exact copy of a dark blue vicugna turned out by a good house. It had just a small vest and cuffs of dark blue velvet to match. The only part of it that requires any special pattern is the drapery, and this can be supplied to our readers if they write for it in the usual way.

The bonnets this winter are snug and close fitting, and most of them have strings, which keep the glands of the throat and ears warm, and for young children hoods are very fashionable, and they are the safest and most comfortable headgear ever devised. Fur boas are still in use, and something of the kind always will be fashionable. A new shape is called the Victoria, and consists of a collarette with long boa ends, and there is another shape very much like the Victorine of thirty years ago.

Those who endeavour to make their own dresses will be glad of a few hints about "tailor" making. The fitting is of course the first thing, and instead of the linings being sewn in with the shoulder and other seams, the material itself is stitched alone, the lining being tacked down at a little distance from each seam. This allows of the seam being pressed down by a hot heavy iron, under which is laid a double piece of wet linen or brown paper. The dampness helps to flatten the seam, and prevents the hot iron from singeing or discolouring the material. Then the lining is brought smoothly over the seam on one side, and turned down and hemmed neatly on the other, so that there are no raw edges, and little if any overcasting. The whalebones, properly shielded (those bought ready covered are best), are fixed in to the breast pleats and under-arm seams before the lining is hemmed over, and the lower part of the front of the jacket bodice has some stiffening laid in between the stuff and the lining, so that it cannot possibly ride up or get out of shape. The buttons are small, so that they only require small buttonholes, and are placed very little more than half an inch apart all down the front. The strong sewing on of all buttons, and hooks and eyes, and equal strength of the stitches that catch up the drapery, are characteristic of all good dressmaking, and a gown thus strongly made will look well to the last, and be as enduring again as if it were flimsily put together. The seams in the skirt and drapery of a woollen dress should be pressed out in the same way as we have described for the bodice, and braiding should always be pressed from the back, though if put on with a sewing machine, the "presser foot" does much to give it a workmanlike appearance.

One or two details of good dressmaking are, never to put a dark skirt on a white band, and, *vice versâ*, never to use for a dark material a body lining which will show white at the seams after a few times wearing. Many of the cheap linings that are black on one side and printed on the other do this, and it is really better to use an old-fashioned soft grey holland or union. A double row of machine stitching round a basque, within the eighth part of an inch of the edge, is also a great though an unobtrusive improvement. These are the little things that give finish to a dress and keep it from having an amateur appearance.

Fashion decrees that stockings should match the dress in all cases, and though black ones are very good all round sort of wear, it is very easy and not in the least extravagant on having a warm dark blue or brown, or perhaps a cardinal dress, to have a couple of pairs of stockings of the same colour. Knitted stockings are thicker and warmer, and wear two or three times as long as even good quality merino such as we buy in the shops, and they can be had direct from the maker at from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a pair. This is on account of the introduction of stocking knitting machines, which, whatever may be said to the contrary, can only be used to the best advantage by a person who knows how to knit stockings well in the old way with four pins. Many ladies who have had to face privation consequent on reduced incomes, have invested a few pounds in a thoroughly good machine, and by strict attention to shape and the use of the best yarns have acquired for themselves quite a reputation, as well as earning a considerable amount of money. But it must be borne in mind that a first-rate machine, knowledge of stocking-knitting, and sufficient capital to buy the wool in advantageous quantities, are essential to success.

Old-fashioned black silks have quite returned to favour, and most of the manufacturers are giving a guarantee with each dress length. The best are those in which the cross thread is rather thick, and which are extremely soft. These are unadulterated with jute, and are for the most part made in Spitalfields. For ornamental purposes, such as panels, vests, sashes, etc., moiré is more worn than anything else, and the larger the "water," the better it is. A great variety of pompadour silks, that is to say, silks with a plain ground dotted over with small coloured flowers, are also being made, and they are particularly pretty for vests and cuffs.

The pattern of the drapery in our illustration can be had by enclosing 6½d. in stamps to M.L., at the office of the MOTHERS' COMPANION. *Every effort will be made to supply patterns promptly, but they cannot be sent by return of post.*